

Province seeks police deal on civilian probes

Runciman aims for solution that satisfies both officers and SIU

By CAROLINE MALLAN
QUEEN'S PARK BUREAU

The province is going to spend the summer trying to come up with a deal to get police officers to co-operate with civilian probes, despite ongoing tension between the two sides, Solicitor-General Bob Runciman said yesterday.

"I have indicated that I'm looking at the possibility of resurrecting the protocol which spells out the relationship, the responsibilities between the SIU (Special Investigations Unit) and police agencies, and deals with the duty to co-operate issue," Runciman said in an interview.

The protocol for police officers involved in shootings or other incidents where a member of the public is killed or seriously injured fell apart in 1992 when officers began refusing to be interviewed by SIU investigators, claiming the interviews violated their constitutional right to remain silent and avoid possibly incriminating themselves.

The unit was only two years old when the problems began.

Other officers who are witnesses to police shootings have also begun to delay meeting with SIU investigators to give statements, prompting criticism from community groups who feel the SIU is not able to do its job properly.

Metro Police Chief David Boothby issued directives to all witness officers last month, ordering them to co-operate in a timely fashion with the SIU.

Activists seek action on fatal police shooting

By PHILIP MASCOLL
STAFF REPORTER

It has been 30 days since Hugh Dawson was slain by Metro police officers and activists are demanding answers.

They want André Marin, director of the province's special investigations unit to charge officers who refuse to speak with his investigators.

"The SIU is acting as a shield for the police," said Barbara Seed of the Coalition Against Racist Violence.

Seed was speaking to a press conference yesterday on Kennedy Rd., south

of Danforth, where Dawson was shot late Easter Sunday by Metro police Constables Rick Shank and Rajeev Sukumaran.

"Police routinely refuse to speak to the SIU, and those who do speak, do so after collaborating to get to get their stories straight," she said.

"By its actions, the SIU is saying that the police can continue to act with impunity and are above the law. The standards that apply to ordinary citizens are not applied to the police."

His order came after the Easter Sunday shooting death of Hugh Dawson. Runciman said finding a solution that satisfies police, community groups and the SIU is on his agenda for the coming months.

"We're looking at the possibility of going out again this summer and seeing if it's possible to achieve a consensus, getting all of the people to sit down and see if there's some way of negotiating a consensus that everyone, to some degree, will be happy with."

Runciman's comments came as officers from across the province descended on Queen's Park to meet with MPPs and express their worries about the upcoming Bill 105, which amends the Police Services Act.

John Moor, president of the Police Association of Ontario, told reporters officers do not like provisions in the bill that allows police chiefs to initially investigate most complaints against officers.

Bill 105 also scraps two levels of civilian oversight of police, and hands police chiefs wider-ranging powers to investigate complaints and to discipline officers, including ordering unpaid suspension for up to five days.

The police association is also opposed to scrapping a time limit for a member of the public to make a complaint about an officer's conduct and opposes the "cumbbersome" avenues of public complaint, Moor said.

Runciman said the bill is intended to pare down the complicated complaints process and save \$3 million at the same time.

He added that he has met with the police association and plans to do so again this week.

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